

**Opening Statement of
Chairman Henry J. Hyde
Before the Full Committee Hearing
“Six-Party Talks and the North Korean Nuclear Issue:
Old Wine in New Bottles?”**

Thursday, October 6, 2005

Ambassador Hill, we are very happy that you have taken time from your busy schedule to be with us here today. Carrying out negotiations with North Korea, as Washington has learned after over five decades of bitter experience, is never pleasant or easy. You and your team of negotiators are to be highly commended for the forbearance and tact which you have demonstrated at the recent Fourth Round of Six-Party Talks in Beijing. We thank you for all of your tireless efforts.

One cannot examine the results of the latest round of negotiations in Beijing, however, without coming away with a sense, as Yogi Berra once famously put it, of “délà vu all over again.” The Joint Statement issued in Beijing is noteworthy both for what is included from the past and for what is omitted.

The “subject of the provision of a light water reactor to North Korea,” for example, which many in the Congress had assumed was forever laid to rest with the demise of the Agreed Framework, has made a miraculous reappearance in the final text of the Joint Statement. There are now even hints that the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), the chief vehicle for light water reactor construction under the Agreed Framework, may have a new lease on life and not be terminated by year’s end as originally suggested. Such developments lead us to wonder if, in a roundabout way, we are not turning back toward a Son of Agreed Framework and spinning our wheels in the process?

Congress’ view on the severe limitations of the Agreed Framework is a matter of public record. A North Korea Advisory Group, made up of both House Members and staff, issued a report to Speaker Hastert in November of 1999 which included the following in its summary: “North Korea’s WMD programs pose a major threat to the United States and its allies. This threat has advanced considerably over the past five years, particularly with the enhancement of North Korea’s missile capabilities. There is significant evidence that undeclared nuclear weapons development activity continues, including efforts to acquire uranium enrichment technologies and recent nuclear-related high explosive tests.”

We now know, of course, that this Congressional report was prescient in its discussion of a highly enriched uranium (HEU) program in North Korea, for it was the verification of HEU activity in 2002 which led to the current impasse. Yet in the Joint Statement in Beijing, there is no precise mention of HEU, the eye at the center of the current North Korean nuclear storm.

American press reports have carried claims that pressure from Beijing, and even our ally South Korea, led us to make concessions on this issue, as well as on other key points in the Six-Party negotiations.

Washington's one time resolute call for a complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement (CVID) of Pyongyang's nuclear weapons has also apparently just faded away. Is CVID no longer in our negotiating lexicon? But can anything less than CVID guarantee the security of the American people and ensure that the rogue regime in Pyongyang will not sell weapons of mass destruction to terrorists who would threaten our very shores and seaports?

I am also concerned that the Joint Statement specifically raises a key Pyongyang propaganda point directly aimed at the South Korean public. This is the clear reference to supposed U.S. hostile intent. The statement says, "The United States affirmed that it has no nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula and has no intention to attack or invade the DPRK (North Korea) with nuclear or conventional weapons." Yet where, in any portion of this statement, is there a reference to Pyongyang's half-century of unswerving hostile intent directed at the Republic of Korea? This hostility is clearly demonstrated by the forward deployment of North Korean conventional forces and artillery near the DMZ, designed to turn Seoul into "a sea of fire." There is no mention of this present threat at all, notwithstanding the fact that its existence is the cornerstone of our 1953 Mutual Defense Treaty with the Republic of Korea.

A recent poll in a South Korean newspaper indicated that 65.9 percent of South Korean youth would take North Korea's side in the event of an outbreak of hostilities with the United States. This clearly demonstrates that we cannot afford to cede any propaganda points to Pyongyang at this critical juncture. The future of our very alliance is at stake as we compete for the hearts and minds of South Korea's people.

The House of Representatives is the holder of the purse strings of the American people. This is a sacred trust. The Joint Statement from the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks declares that, "China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United States stated their willingness to provide energy assistance to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)." At a time of overwhelming national concern for homeless fellow citizens along the Gulf Coast without electricity due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, any energy deal for North Korea will not be an easy matter for consideration by the Congress. More shipments of heavy fuel oil to Pyongyang when the price of gasoline in the United States averages three dollars a gallon will be met with an angry shriek. The green eyeshades of Congressional accountants will go over any final agreement that involves the commitment of U.S. tax dollars with a fine tooth comb. Such a final deal must be air tight to ensure that we have not given away the farm with little in return beyond more broken promises from Pyongyang.

In conclusion, Mr. Ambassador, I must return to those famous words of President Ronald Reagan when considering the ongoing Six-Party Talks in Beijing: "Trust but verify." If verification was crucial to success in Cold War negotiations with the Soviet Union, it is even more so in striking any deal with the secretive and patently nontransparent North Korean regime.

How can we reach a final agreement that is acceptable to all the parties concerned and yet which passes this verification test? The welfare of the American people and our allies hangs in the balance. We look forward to hearing your thoughts. Thank you.

And now let me turn to my friend, Tom Lantos, the Ranking Democratic Members, for any remarks he wishes to make.